

Improving the Universal Periodic Review

Background

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was established by A/RES/60/251 OP 5(e) to “review, based on objective and reliable information, of the fulfillment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments in a manner which ensures universality of coverage and equal treatment with respect to all States.” Starting in 2008, the HRC began reviewing all UN member states in a four year cycle. The first cycle will end in 2011.

Issues to Address

The UPR is a major innovation of the HRC, and has been a good tool for reviewing all member states on equal grounds. The UPR should be strengthened by improving the follow-up mechanism and ensuring a more comprehensive review.

Concrete Proposals

1. Allow all governments who want to speak at a UPR to do so and allot them adequate time. This will require an advanced speaker sign up list to allow for appropriate scheduling. The length of a country’s UPR will vary, commensurate with the number of states who have asked to speak. Congratulatory statements from governments should be disfavored.
2. The OHCHR should develop a new report for a country’s second UPR that assesses its response to the recommendations from the first round and the obstacles to implementation of accepted recommendations.
3. Establish rules for the content of the second round UPR report to leave out information on basic constitutional structures and put in a self-assessment on how the state under review is implementing recommendations accepted at the first UPR round. Similarly stakeholder reports should include information on follow through on recommendations.